John 1:1-14

1 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. 2 The Word was with God in the beginning. 3 Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being. What came into being 4 through the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light. 6 A man named John was sent from God. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. 8 He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light. 9 The true light that shines on all people was coming into the world. 10 The light was in the world, and the world came into being through the light, but the world didn't recognize the light. 11 The light came to his own people, and his own people didn't welcome him. 12 But those who did welcome him, those who believed in his name, he authorized to become God's children, 13 born not from blood nor from human desire or passion, but born from God. 14 The Word became flesh and made his home among us. We have seen his glory, glory like that of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Sermon

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit: Amen.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. John's version of the nativity has no Roman census, no manger scene, no shepherds, no star marking the place of Jesus' birth, none of the markers of what we think about the Christmas story. What John tells us is that the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and this word is the core of Christmas, the center of the incarnation.

Yet, what word was it? So many words compete for our attention in society. Our culture puts in front of us so many words and phrases that demand our consideration, that seek our devotion. In the raucous

noise of our world, it's so hard to hear the word that became flesh.

Words like violence crash into the picture. Words that work destruction, that seek to tear the sinews from the skeletons of our souls. Words that would rather life rather than water it. Words that demolish rather than build up. Words that annihilate rather than create. Violence is not the word that became flesh.

But still other words call out to us, words like hatred. Words that create division rather than seek unity. Words that bring depression rather than joy. Words that cause us to judge the worst in others rather than celebrate the best. Words that foster

oppression rather than restoration. Hatred is not the word that became flesh.

Yet, it's fairly easy to identify these words as not the Gospel. There's still other words that seem much more tempting, because we can dress them up as Trojan horses, that, though attractive, are hollow, phony, and entirely lacking good news.

Words like more. Our culture tells us that acquiring things is an inherent good, that the good life requires more stuff. Yet, words like more leave us feeling as though enough is just never enough. That we need to buy more, acquire more, take more, steal more, even if it means we put others at a disadvantage. Even if when we have all we need, more becomes addictive, when we can no longer

be satisfied with what we have. More is not the word that became flesh.

Words like power. All too often, people assume that power is something to be sought, to be used, for good. Yet, power becomes an idol that seeks its own survival, power becomes absorbed in keeping power rather than seeking good. Power unchecked becomes a selfish pursuit of control and authority rather than a directive to bless those without power. Power is not the word that became flesh.

In a world of violence and hatred, a world seeking more of anything and power over everything, another word appeared, one that challenges every other word. Into a world of violence, into the Roman empire that expand

through the conquests of war, came the a word of peace, a peace from God that surpasses understanding in the miracle of a virgin birth, one announced by angels and witnessed by shepherds. This is the word that became flesh.

Into a world of hatred, filled with a humanity that embraced the divisiveness of sin, came a word of reconciliation, a word that sought to span the distance of heaven and earth. A word that broke the walls of hatred and instead built a house of relationship. A word that refused to allow division to define humanity and instead sought to bind us together in a common mission, a common kingdom, a common body. This is the word that became flesh.

In a world that demanded more, and more, and more, a word came and embraced less. In a word that lusted for power, the infinite word, the word of God, chose to become human, to understand limitation not as an obstacle but as a blessing. That sharing divinity was better than hoarding it. That spreading goodness was better than holding it for yourself and hiding it from others. This is the word that became flesh.

This word is love. Love that forsakes violence and hatred with peace and reconciliation. Love that doesn't need more of anything because love is enough. Love that doesn't demand power but instead embraces our limitations. Love is the word that became flesh. Love is the word that spoke the

universe into being, that counts the hairs on our heads, that knew us before we were knitted together in our mothers' wombs. The word of Christmas is love. Love is the word that became flesh and dwelt among us.

And the Gospels that we read throughout the rest of the year show us the nature of that love. The love that heals the sick and feeds the hungry and lifts up the poor. The love that refused to stone the woman caught in adultery and recognized the woman at the well as someone worthy of respect. The love that raises Lazarus from the dead. The love that walks to the cross because we don't return that love, and rises from the tomb because not amount of scorn or hate or death can keep that love from His

beloved. Nothing can keep us from the love of God. Not even ourselves.

That's the word born on Christmas. In the beginning was love, and love was with God, and love was God. Love became flesh and dwelt among us. And love's name is Jesus. Amen.